

The FP6 European project BAFN “BALKAN AGRO FOOD NETWORK”

Background and overview

Several initiatives were implemented to facilitate the access to EU research programmes for researchers from the Western Balkan Countries (WBC). In 2003, a “EU-Balkan Countries Action plan in Science and Technology” was adopted. This action plan identified four initiatives to be promoted (“support to research infrastructures”, “improvement of the human potential”, “institutional building” and “promotion of joint research activities”) and five scientific fields of intervention (“Information and Communication Technologies”, “Energy”, “Environment”, “Agriculture” and “Cultural Heritage”).

The project Balkan Agro Food Network (BAFN) intends to contribute to these efforts in the area of agricultural and food research. The overall objective of the project is to support the opening of the European Research Area by developing a sustainable network in agricultural and food sector in the Western Balkan.

BAFN is a project supported by the European Commission under the sixth Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development (FP6). The project started on 1st May 2006 and will run for two years, ending in April 2008. The project gathers partners from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, FYROM and Serbia. Organisations from Bulgaria, Hungary and Greece with good knowledge of European research programmes also participate in the project. The project is co-ordinated by Euroquality, a consulting company established in Paris.

Major outputs of the project

- *One research database and one database for companies*

The databases are a tool intended to foster the building of networks between agricultural and food organisations from the WBC and agrifood organisations from the EU. It is designed to help researchers, research centres and companies to initiate co-operation with others, and to identify scientists or organisations with specific competencies. These databases are available on-line on BAFN portal (www.bafn.eu). At the beginning of November 2007, **289 research groups, 783 researchers and 164 companies** expressed their interest and register in the information platform bafn.eu.

- *A mapping report*

Four National mapping reports, identifying the research potential in the field of agricultural and food research in each Western Balkan Country covered by the BAFN project were drafted in May 2007. The reports include data on the organisations (type of organisation, average size, production and productivity) and on the scientists (level and sector of education, age, gender etc.). A consolidated mapping report identifying the main players in agricultural and food research and industry was delivered in March 2008. All these reports are available on-line on bafn.eu.

- *Recommendations on research areas and support instruments*

A Synthesis Report, identifying current situation and future needs of the Western Balkan agrifood research was delivered in April 2008. The report includes a list of the main fields considered as the priority areas for agricultural and food research and industry in each country. It also includes a description of supports mechanisms that could contribute to answer specific problems of research and industry organisations from the Western Balkan Countries. The report is a contribution to the implementation of the “EU-Balkan Countries Action plan in Science and Technology” in the agricultural and food sector. A Position Paper which was presented in Paris on March 28, 2008 at a High level meeting is now available on-line on bafn.eu by the end of March 2008.

The objectives of BAFN are achieved thanks to the creation of a **network of agrifood research groups, researchers and companies**. Researchers and research groups are invited to register their profile into an on-line and dynamic database as well as the companies. Networking is then stimulated thanks to the involvement in national consultations and to the communication of relevant information for scientists and companies from the agricultural and food sector.

BAFN partnership

The consortium gathers 13 organisations from 8 countries.

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